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HENRI QUEUILLE: BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

Description

The background, political career, and political affiliations of Henri Queuille; his relations with de Gaulle; his present political tendencies and future prospects.

23 June 1944

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HENRI QUEUILLE: BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY
(1884-).

A. BACKGROUND

Throughout his political career Henri Queuille has maintained close connections with the department in the South-central part of France in which he was born, Corrèze. A doctor by training, he became mayor of his home town of Neuvic in 1912; in 1913 he was elected to represent Neuvic on the departmental General Council; since 1914 he served as deputy for Corrèze, and since 1939 as senator for Corrèze.

B. NATIONAL MINISTRIES

His rise to cabinet rank was rapid. Under-secretary of State for Agriculture in 1920, reporter for the agricultural budget in 1921 and 1923, he became Minister of Agriculture in 1924. He was Minister of Agriculture in a variety of cabinets from 1924-8, and again in 1930, 1932-4, 1938; he was Minister of Food Supplies in the Reynaud cabinet until March 1940. He also has been Minister of Posts, Telephones and Telegraphs (1932), Health (1934), and Public Works (1937-8). Altogether he has been Minister in more than 20 cabinets. In 1939 he aspired to the Presidency of the Republic, at the time of Lebrun's reelection to that office.

C. POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS

Queuille has always belonged to the Radical Socialist Party. He is on particularly friendly terms with Herriot. He has also been described as belonging to the Daladier group. Like his department of Corrèze, he is closely identified with

agriculture. His tenure at the Ministry of Agriculture was pointed to as one of the elements of stability in the flux of cabinet reshuffles. He has been frequently represented as the spokesman for the peasants. It might be more exact to characterize him as the symbol of the strength of the Radical Socialist Party among the peasants at the end of the Third Republic.

D. QUEUILLE AND THE WAR

Queuille was a member of the Daladier cabinet which was in power during the Munich crisis in 1938, and of Reynaud's war cabinet of 1940. He is not clearly identified with the appeasement wing of the Radical Socialists; he is also not clearly identified with the bellicistes. The apparent hesitancy which characterizes his pre-1940 position on international questions corresponds with his ambiguous vote on 10 July 1940 on the question of granting full powers to Pétain: he was not one of the 80 who voted against, but is recorded as a voluntary abstention. According to Pertinax, he probably also abstained from voting at the fateful session of the Reynaud cabinet on 16 June 1940, when the British offer of an alliance was turned down 13-11.

E. QUEUILLE AND THE FCNL

Queuille arrived in London from France in April 1943. Prior to that he does not appear to have been associated in any way with the Vichy government; nothing else is known about his activities in 1940-3. His escape was engineered by de Gaulle's secret service. In June 1943 he was deprived of French nationality and of his mandate as senator by Vichy. After arriving

in North Africa at the end of July 1943, he occupied a number of important positions in the FCNL. He became Commissioner without portfolio in the reshuffle which eliminated Giraud from the Committee in November 1943. Originally chairman of the Commission du Débarquement, charged with planning for the reoccupation of Metropolitan France, Queuille's role in this field has become distinctly secondary since the appointment of Le Troquer as the Committee's civil delegate. Later named Commissioner of State, he was placed in charge of all food matters in January 1944, including negotiations with the Allies. His influence within the Committee, in the role of experienced older-statesman, was reported to be considerable. It was De Gaulle that consulted him regularly. In April, however, he lost his authority to negotiate with the Allies on economic matters, and was reported as "disassociating himself" from the events leading to the ouster of Giraud as commander-in-chief. In June he was named acting President of the French Committee during de Gaulle's absence in London (a position he had also held in January), and since de Gaulle's return he has been more in the public eye in Algiers than before.

F. PRESENT TENDENCIES

Queuille's attitude on specific current issues is not known. As Commissioner without portfolio, he has not been called upon to commit himself by participation in the debates of the Consultative Assembly. He is described as a conservative republican. It is reasonable to suppose that he would be personally inclined towards retaining, so far as possible, the

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social and political institutions of the Third Republic. He is frank in his dislike for Communists. In foreign affairs, he has shown great concern for Franco-American relations; in the economic negotiations he showed a disposition to compromise with the Allied position on the issue of stockpiling versus pooling of resources. He has supported de Gaulle, insisting on his strength in France and importance at this time, but has none of the personal devotion to de Gaulle as a leader which some of his followers show. In December 1943, in an interview with American observers, he urged that it would be a great mistake for the U.S. not to make a specific agreement with de Gaulle and [illegible] Committee, maintaining that the fear of de Gaulle dictatorship was fallacious, and arguing that failure to back the Committee strengthened the Communists. In spite of the report that he lost his control over economic negotiations with the Allies owing to disputes with Pleven and his "disassociation" from recent events, the available evidence suggests that if he has adopted a more oppositional position, he has been more cautious than other Radical Socialists in Algiers. It is possible that de Gaulle has pushed him forward for two reasons--first to demonstrate the moderate character of the government; second, to counteract the efforts of a Parliamentary group in France and in North Africa, primarily composed of Radical Socialists, who have called for the restoration of the Third Republic. Whatever mental reservations Queuille may make, he has in fact been a symbol of Parliamentary adherence to the Committee.

G. PERSONALITY

Queuille is described as a small, bright, good natured

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man of 60 who has retained the political views and gifts of a country doctor, and as having an obvious taste for practical, "sensible" arrangements. His career shows no evidence of aggressive defense of principles, and considerable evidence of a desire for high office combined with a penchant for compromise and caution.

H. QUEUILLE'S POLITICAL FUTURE

Queuille has been frequently cited by the representatives of French resistance in Algiers as one of those old parliamentarians whom liberated France will reject. Queuille would pin his hopes for elective office in liberated France on the peasants, who, he has said, have not yet been heard from. It is likely that support for the Radical Socialists, even from the peasants, will show a decline; how much of a decline, is one of the unknowns in the French political situation. Until this and other uncertainties are cleared up, Queuille is likely to continue his cautious middle-of-the-road policy.

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